

BEYOND THE BALLOT: Action Civics for Active Citizens

2 Lesson Plans to Reinvigorate Civic Attitudes in 7th-12th grade students after the 2016 presidential election



November 2016





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ABOUT BEYOND THE BALLOT

Beyond the Ballot is an initiative of Generation Citizen to turn the unprecedented negativity and frustration caused by the 2016 presidential election into meaningful and passionate local political participation. We want to begin a path to rebuild the foundations of our democracy. Our initiative is meant to teach, inspire, and empower the next generation to engage with—and lead—the political system.

ABOUT OUR BEYOND THE BALLOT LESSON PLANS

As part of the initiative, we developed a 2-lesson curriculum that will reinvigorate civic attitudes and motivation in students. By drawing students' attention to their local governments, systems and services, students will gain appreciation for the potential power of their actions at a local level. Students will work together to choose an issue in their community they feel needs to be solved, and then seek out a local elected official to address it.

By the end of the two lessons, students will be better equipped to engage in their local communities. Additionally, these lessons will help to produce a renewed perspective of political engagement of positivity, hope, and productivity, rather than one of confusion and disillusion. One lucky class, whose work is shared with Generation Citizen, will be selected to have a local elected official come speak in their classroom.

You will find that the lesson plans are highly adaptable. In fact, they require adaptation to correspond with your state and local government and the challenges faced in your community. This adaptability factor is important in regards to the goal of the lessons, and also valuable in that they can be utilized at any point in any school year and can be expanded to provide additional skill building for students.

ABOUT GENERATION CITIZEN

Generation Citizen is a nonprofit organization that works to ensure that every student in the United States receives an action civics education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens.

Generation Citizen's published and award-winning semester-long action civics curriculum is at the heart of our work. It is action-based, aligned to Common Core and state standards, and academically rigorous. Over the course of the twice-weekly semester-long in-class program, students choose an issue, develop a focused, strategic plan to address the issue, take real action, and then reflect on their successes and challenges. For more information about our program visit Generationcitizen.org or get in touch at Beyondtheballot@generationcitizen.org.

#BeyondtheBallot



Lesson 1: Local Government Knowledge

OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will develop a greater understanding and appreciation for local government and their role in it. Through discussion and a group competition game, students will review the basic structures of the federal government and assess how these compare and contrast with their state and local government equivalents. Through a self-survey they will become more aware of the ways in which local government affects their daily lives, communities and the issues they care about which they'll have a chance to express in their Exit Tickets.

This lesson is in preparation for **Day 2**, during which students will apply what they've learned to address an issue in their community. The content from today's lesson is essential in knowing how to approach the tasks for tomorrow's lesson.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- List and define the basic composition and duties of the 3 federal branches of government.
- List and define the basic composition and duties of the 3 branches of their state and local levels of government.
- Compare and contrast federal, state, and local government compositions and duties.
- Identify local government services that function in their community.
- Identify which local government agencies influence the issues in their community.
- Show the relevance that the local government holds in their daily lives.

AGENDA (for a 50 minute lesson)

- Activating Strategy/Do Now: Election Reflection and Discussion (10 minutes)
- Government in My Life Survey and Discussion (10 minutes)
- Review Federal Levels of Government (5 minutes)
- State and Local Levels Matching Competition (20 minutes)
- Exit Ticket and Share Out: Why is local government important to me? (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Projector for showing the political cartoon (see Appendix A)
- Student Handouts (see Appendix B-G)
- Post-it notes
- Poster (if writing the Exit Ticket on there instead of the board)

PREPARATION BEFORE CLASS

- Make copies of all print outs (see Appendix).
- Cut the Student Involvement Examples into separate strips for each example.
- Gather materials.
- Modify the Survey to make more specific for your area and issues your students are more interested in. (OPTIONAL)
- Complete the Government Compare/Contrast chart and Word Bank (see Appendix D-G) with state and local government information for your area.
- Put students into heterogeneous groups according to academic abilities. (This is to ensure that groups have student leaders dispersed throughout the groups so the competition is more fair and competitive.)
- Create a poster and/or write on the board for the Exit Ticket question: Why is local government important to me? (Write this before class begins so it is available for referencing throughout the lesson.)



RESOURCES/REFERENCES

- Use the provided examples (see Appendix F-G) for additional clarification and/or ideas.
- To find information regarding your local government for filling out the Comparison charts to make them specific to your area,
 - Try this website which has links to each state's website on local government in their state (<https://www.usa.gov/local-governments>)
 - Do a basic Google searches; for example
 - Your area + local government
 - “How do I find my local representative?”
- Additional helpful websites:
 - Forms of municipal governments: <http://www.nlc.org/build-skills-and-networks/resources/cities-101/city-structures/forms-of-municipal-government>
 - Finding local government officials: http://act.commoncause.org/site/PageServer?pagename=sunlight_advocacy_list_page



GETTING STARTED (10 minutes)

DO NOW: Election Reflection (3 minutes)

Show Political Cartoon (see Appendix A) – project it or make copies for students to view it. Ask students to reflect on the cartoon and jot down some thoughts to answer the following:

1. What do you think this cartoon is trying to convey about this election?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the message of the cartoon?
3. How does this cartoon compare to your feelings about the election?

Discussion (7 minutes)

Debrief: When finished, ask students to share out what they wrote down. Facilitate a brief discussion about feelings surrounding this election. Ensure that the discussion touches on the fact that regardless of which side people are on, there are a lot of feelings and frustrations. Ask students questions like, why is that the case? How can we move forward?

Framing: Transition to some good news: the significant role of local government and the power individuals have to influence lower levels of government. In other words, just because this **federal** election for the president has been confusing or difficult, doesn't mean there isn't still work to do and ways to be effective. Ask students: What are ways that people can influence government *other than* voting in an election? Expect and/or encourage responses until you get a list including things like:

- Protest
- Attend a rally
- Join a political party
- Write/contact an elected official
- Attend a community meeting
- Watch the news/stay informed

Of particular importance is “contact an elected official” - the goal of these lessons. Record students' ideas on the board. Explain to students that at the end of these two days, we are going to get in touch with people of power and put pressure on them to make change in our community. Tell students that because we will be focusing on issues relevant to our local communities, we will be learning about our local government offices and elected officials first.

Pass out the individual strips of Student Involvement Examples (see Appendix B) and ask different students to read each one. Tell students we are going to try to bring about similar change in our community. We will be working on learning how to do this today and tomorrow.

DURING CLASS (35 minutes)

Government in My Life: Survey and Discussion (10 minutes)

Distribute to students Government Services/Day in the Life Survey (see Appendix C). ****Note:** this survey should serve to get students thinking about the ways that government, and specifically local government, is a part of their daily lives and communities. It should get them thinking about the things they care about in their community and the services provided by local government related to these. Ask students to spend some time thinking about their community and the things they feel should be improved or addressed and to answer the questions on the survey accordingly. Provide approximately 3-5 minutes.

Discuss: Ask students to share out their answers. Use the reflection questions on the handout after the survey to help guide a brief, all class discussion.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS

SIDEBAR: Throughout the lesson plan, this sidebar is a place where you can find lesson modification suggestions and other tips for enacting each lesson.

TIP: This is a good time to discuss 1) whether students voted or not and 2) to establish and emphasize that people can still make an impact without voting, especially since many of your students may not be eligible to vote yet or for some time.

#BEYONDTHEBALLOT

Take a picture of your board and the list of additional ways to be civically engaged. Share out to show that students know ways to participate
#BeyondtheBallot

TIP: The survey is more general in nature and can be used that way or made more specific. Feel free to modify the survey to make it more specific to your students and their experiences.



Framing: Use this time to demonstrate to students the following

1. The prevalence of local government in their lives – all the many services they benefit from or interact with on a day to day basis
2. The ways in which they are benefitting from their local government running well. Do this by highlighting the issues not circled – most of these are likely done well in your community.
3. The services related to the issues they care about so they can better address these concerns.

Use the final reflection question to establish the necessity of today’s lesson and the next task. If we want to have power to change or improve our communities, we need to know what the related government services are, and who is in charge of them, so we know who to target with our requests.

Tell students that over the two class periods, they’ll be focusing on an important issue in their community, and targeting the person(s) who make decisions on that issue. Acknowledge that, though the election is over, citizens still have opportunities to get involved and make a difference in their communities. Remind students that though they may have felt like a small fish in a big pond in the federal election, at the local level, they are a much bigger fish in a much smaller pond.

Federal Government Review (5 minutes) (Depending on your students’ prior knowledge at this point, adjust review time accordingly.)

In order to understand their sphere of influence as a citizen of their community, explain to students that we need to understand who oversees which things. In other words, what are the local government equivalents of president, congress, etc.?

Pass out to students the Government Comparisons sheet (see Appendix D). On the left-hand side of the chart students will see federal level branches of government (the middle column will be for state equivalents and the far right for local government). If these are things you’ve already gone over with your students, then quickly ask students to share out what they already know and fill in the blanks. If this is new information to your students, feel free to ask students if they know the answers. Provide this information for students either way and elaborate as you feel appropriate.

Competition and Recap: State and Local Government (20 minutes)

Once the left-hand side is complete, explain to students that we are going to have a timed competition to see who can fill out the local and state government portions of the chart correctly in the shortest amount of time. (**Prior to this class period, you’ll have already split students into leveled heterogeneous groups of 3-4 students to make the competition fair.) Each group will receive a fresh chart (see Appendix E) with all the left-hand information filled out, but the middle and right sides will be blank. In addition, each group will also receive a “Word Bank” (see Appendix F for an example) with phrases that are lettered and correspond to the empty boxes. (**Note: You’ll have to modify this Word Bank for your local area.) Using their combined knowledge and brainstorming, students should work together to fill in these empty boxes with phrases from the bank. As soon as a group has finished, they should turn their sheets in to you. Remind them to put a team name on it. Limit the amount of time to 5 minutes. Once the time is up, all remaining charts must be turned in if there are any left.

TIP: If your students have little knowledge about the federal government, consider providing students with a chart that already has that column filled out. Review it with them rather than having them fill it out.

TIP: If you have additional time or want to extend the lesson, you could have students first attempt to fill out the left-hand side of the chart by themselves or with a partner before going over it together as a class.

TIP: If you are working with younger students or with students who need additional support, you can provide them with a chart that has some of the middle and right column boxes filled out (either the harder or easier ones depending on how challenging you want the activity to be.)



Then, pass the charts back out to different groups for checking. Use the completed chart you've already filled out prior to class as a key (see Appendix G for an example). Go through the chart with students and have students check and grade the group chart in front of them.

During the checking and review of the correct boxes, ask students to record correct information in their original individual charts (Appendix D document already handed out) where they took the federal level review notes.

At the end, whichever group got the most correct in the shortest amount of time wins.

Review and summarize the information learned today about who oversees which things at the state and local levels. During review, draw students' attention to the similarities between the levels, as well as the differences. Depending on time, have students share out things learned. You can also have students do a pair/share before reviewing together as a class.

WRAPPING UP (5 minutes)

Exit Ticket – Why is local government important to me? (5 minutes)

Reference the paper/board sign at the front of the room that says “Why is local government important to me?” Explain to students that tomorrow we are going to focus on a community issue that students are interested in and work towards bringing about change in their community.

1. Ask students to write down on a post it note: 1) their name, 2) a community issue (from the survey) that is important to them and 3) a level/branch of local government that oversees it. (**Note: students should be using their completed Government Comparison Charts to determine the related level and branch.)
2. Emphasize to students that this Exit Ticket is their vote. Whichever issue is listed the most will be addressed together as a class tomorrow.
3. Have students share their post-its if there is time.
4. Either way, have them put their post-its on the poster or board on the way out of the room.

TIP: It can be helpful to project the correct answers and/or completed chart on the board while going over it so that students have a visual as they complete their own charts.

TIP: You can offer a prize to the winning group – something that your students would enjoy (ex. Candy, extra credit, etc.)

#BEYONDTHEBALLOT

Take a picture of your board with students' community interests and concerns. Share out to show how our young people care about their communities and want to make a difference
#BeyondtheBallot



Lesson 2: Getting Involved and Taking Action

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the goal is for students to discover that they can address issues that are of importance to them. Students will utilize knowledge gained from the previous lesson on local government branches to address individuals or groups who have power over these issues. After learning more about their chosen issue, students will work together to identify solutions for their chosen issue. At the end, students will have the opportunity to provide their own opinion or stance to the issue, and call on political officials to do something about it.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Distinguish and assess opinions that are different from theirs, particularly those of their peers.
- Summarize their own opinions and share with others.
- Formulate solutions to problems they care about.
- Apply knowledge of local government to a local issue.
- Connect with a local official by sharing their opinions and ideas about an issue.
- Identify their own civic power as citizens of their community.

AGENDA (for a 50 minute lesson)

- Activating Strategy/Do Now: Review Yesterday (5 minutes)
- Issue Background Information (5 minutes)
- Brainstorming Solutions (15 minutes)
- Taking Action (15 minutes)
- Exit Ticket and Share Out: Making a Commitment (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Board – white board, chalk board, smart board, etc. – any type will do
- Poster paper (if not using a board)
- Student Handouts (see Appendix H, J, and M)

PREPARATION BEFORE CLASS

- Make copies of all hand outs (see Appendix).
- Review student exit tickets from yesterday. Based off the frequency of student responses, choose the most frequently listed issue. (**Note: It is imperative for the issue to be localized as this is an opportunity for students to see their power as citizens in their local community.)
- Do a bit of research to create an Issue Debrief (see Appendix H for template and example – you'll need to replace the answers with information for your class's issue) that covers the basic background information.
 - Lesson 2 could be done a couple of class periods later if you need additional time to find research relating to the issue to create the Issue Debrief.
- Either research or brainstorm for possible solutions to the chosen issue while doing your research. This way you'll have some in mind if students have a difficult time brainstorming solutions.
 - See Appendix I for an Example Solution List
- Gather materials
- Create a poster and/or write on the board for the Exit Ticket question.

RESOURCES/REFERENCES

- Use the provided examples (see Appendix H, I and K) for additional clarification and/or ideas.
- When researching your students' chosen issue, try an internet search for
 - The issue + your local area
 - The issue (and then click on the News tab)



- When researching potential solutions for your students' chosen issue, try an internet search for
 - The issue
 - The issue + solutions (can also click on the News tab for this search)



GETTING STARTED (10 minutes)

DO NOW: Brainstorming the Issues (5 minutes)

To start off Lesson 2, spend a few minutes reviewing Lesson 1's material. (**This is particularly important if you have a few days in between Lesson 1 and 2.) Post the following review questions:

1. Who are my state legislators?
2. Who are/is my local representative(s)?
3. List 3 ways to get involved in your community *other than* voting.
4. Why would an elected official care about what I think if I cannot vote?

Tell students to use their notes from yesterday to answer these questions. Go over the answers together. Pay special attention to question #4. Discuss this with students briefly and help them get to a conclusion that includes the ability of nonvoters to still put pressure on elected officials because they are constituents too and can, for example, create positive or negative publicity for them. Plus, they can influence the people who *can* and *are* voting and might be voters themselves one day.

Framing: Explain to students that as a class today, we are going to focus on the issue and service that was most voted on by students in their Exit Tickets at the end of Lesson 1. Tell them that we will first go over some background information related to the issue and then work together to come up with some solutions to the problem. After that, we will target the people who have power over the issue and ask them to act on it. Encourage students that today is a day for students to use their power as citizens and learn how to use it again in the future.

Issue Background Information (5 minutes)

Reveal the issue that was voted on the most by students. Congratulate them for identifying an issue in their community that needs attention. Remind students that if this is not the issue they chose, they'll still be 1) learning some skills that they can use to address the issue they did want to work on and 2) contributing to making a positive impact in their community.

Explain to students that you have gathered some helpful statistics, facts, and background information regarding the issue. Pass out the Issue Debrief (see Appendix H for example) to students. Go through each point on the report with students. Have individual students read aloud the different portions and provide opportunity for questions and clarifications as you go through it. (**Note: For Section V on the Issue Debrief, have students use yesterday's notes to determine the answer: "Which local branch has influence over this issue? Which group or individual, specifically?") It is important that students understand the issue so that they can adequately brainstorm solutions.

DURING CLASS (30 minutes)

Brainstorming Solutions: Partner Work (5 minutes)

For the next activity, students will work together to identify approximately 3 different possible solutions to their chosen issue. To begin, have students get into pairs and work together to brainstorm some solutions to the chosen issue. Give students 5 minutes, and ask them to think and then write down solutions. As an example, remind students of one the examples read aloud yesterday of students working to solve a problem in their community. Remind them about what issue those students cared about and what they did to help make a change.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS

SIDEBAR: Throughout the lesson plan, this sidebar is a place where you can find lesson modification suggestions other tips for enacting each lesson.

TIP: If you'd like for students to work on these questions individually first, you can print out these questions and have them answer them before going over together. This will add additional time.

TIP: If you have additional class time and you'd like to provide an opportunity for students to debate between the top 2 or 3 issues which issue they'll be focusing on, you could extend this activity. We recommend a consensus building activity where students come to an agreement after having debated.

TIP: If you have additional time or want to extend the lesson, you could have students do a more formal Think, Pair, Share and have them first brainstorm alone before working with a partner.



Brainstorming Solutions: All Class Work (10 minutes)

Have students come back together for an all class discussion. Ask each partner pair to share an idea they had and record these on the board (see Appendix I for example list). Encourage students to be respectful during this time; all ideas are welcome and will be helpful in working towards a solution. Probe students to think deeper as you go through by asking them which branch and/or department might be able to achieve the solution a student provides. (For example, if a student says there needs to be more educational classes on a certain topic, then probe them to think about who might have power over that – the schoolboard, the city council, perhaps a state legislator.)

If students are struggling to come up with things, this is a good time to bring up either ideas you have brainstormed and/or to bring up solutions that other cities or states have implemented for a similar problem in their communities.

Once students have finished sharing and a list has been created, conduct a vote with students on the top 3 best solutions. Remind students that these will be turned into the requests being made of government officials. These are the things we want our government to do to make a change in our community. Students should keep this in mind when voting. Narrow the list down to the best 3 (or less if there aren't enough viable options). Once the final 3 are determined, spend a couple minutes with students identifying which branch, department, committee or group can achieve a solution like each listed. Narrow this down to the appropriate person – a legislator, the mayor, an alderman or city council member, for example.

Taking Action (15 minutes)

Explain to students that now we are going to turn our concerns into action. Provide students with a letter template (see Appendix J). Based on the solutions on the board, each student needs to complete the paragraph template (see Appendix K for examples). Student responses can be different... in fact they probably should be.

If during discussion, there are students who feel adamant that this is either a nonissue or they like the current work that is being done, they can use the second template (Appendix J - ii). This is something you can address with students on a one on one basis if you find the need arises. It doesn't need to be provided as an option for the full class necessarily.

Students should first fill out the template and then, if you plan on mailing these in, they need to write a fresh copy of their completed letter. Students can either type these and, depending on internet access, email these to the officials or mail them directly.

WRAPPING UP (10 minutes)

Exit Ticket: Post Discussion and Commitment (5 minutes)

Once students are finished with their letters (and/or during their final minutes completing these letters), lead students in a positive and motivating call and response discussion. Ask students a series of questions and ask for call outs.

1. How do political officials get into office? (Answer: They get elected!)
2. Who elects them? (Answer: We do!)
3. What do elected officials have to do to get me to vote for them? (Answer: Pay attention to and address the things I care about!)
4. What if I can't vote? Why would elected officials still care about me and what I think? (Answer: I might be voting someday! I'm a constituent. And,

#BEYONDTHEBALLOT

Take a picture of your board with the list of solutions students come up with. Share it to show students brainstorming about change in their communities #BeyondtheBallot!

TIP: Depending on internet access at your school, you can have students do either quick or more in depth research (depending on time available) on what has been tried in other places.

TIP: If you feel this template is not advanced enough for your students or too structured, you can modify appropriately. You can also use this as a starting point and ask for students to expound upon it.

#BEYONDTHEBALLOT

Take photos of either students writing the letters or of just their letters. Share these out to show students taking action on issues #BeyondtheBallot

TIP: Given internet access and school protocol, students could also send abbreviated versions via tweets to elected officials.



nonvoters can still provide positive or negative publicity for an elected official through, for example, protest. There **are** voters who care about the things I care about, too and I can persuade them!

5. How does this relate to our action today?

Remind students of their power as members of their community - as constituents who elected officials pay attention to. Ask students to commit to something to continue their work beyond the ballot. Post the list of provided options (see Appendix L) and ask each student to fill out a Commitment form (see Appendix M). “I am going beyond the ballot by _____” If there is time, have students share out.

Encourage them to continue to follow this issue. As a class, you could follow it together, as well. Congratulate students on addressing a need in their community and being active citizens. Thank them for being thoughtful change makers.

TIP – Print Appendix L and hang in your classroom to inspire your students to continue taking action in their community

#BEYONDTHEBALLOT

We'd love to see students' commitments. Take photos of students with their commitment form (*Note, you do not have to have their faces in the picture.) Share these out to show students making commitments to be engaged and to encourage others to do the same
#BeyondtheBallot



APPENDIX

OVERVIEW

This appendix includes all referenced handouts and examples from the lessons. All materials are labeled as “Appendix *Letter*” (Ex. Appendix B). Materials are in the order they are referenced in the curriculum. You’ll notice that things that must be modified are in **red**. Though there are other things that *can* be modified, that is up to preference. Optional changes are mentioned in the Lesson Plans.

Also, please note, all examples provided are for Franklin, TN – a local community in middle Tennessee. As mentioned previously, the entire curriculum can and should be modified for your local area.

At the end of the materials portion, there is a “Lesson Extension” section which includes ideas for ways to extend the lessons for additional days, use for different times in the year, and/or to provide additional, more challenging activities for students.

LESSON 1: DO NOW – POLITICAL CARTOON



STUDENT INVOLVEMENT EXAMPLES

Dirty Streets

Students in Brooklyn, NY lobbied their councilmember to have the city update its “Sanitation Scorecard,” a 1980s tool used to assess city streets. Their council member quoted the class’s research while pushing for action during a budget hearing with the Sanitation Department later that year.

Gang Violence

Students in Malden, MA identified a lack of after-school activity options for young people as a motivator for students to get involved in gangs and other sorts of trouble. They urged their city councilor to support the construction of a teen center, and upon his election as mayor, he secured funding to make Malden’s first Teen Enrichment Center a reality.

Severe Drought

Students in San Francisco, CA addressed water conservation on their campus by requesting an audit from the SF Public Utilities Commission and were successful in getting new automatic sinks in all school restrooms. They then testified at a Board of Education meeting for bolder changes district-wide and met with their district supervisor to request funding for the improvements.

Student Voice

Seniors in Providence, RI created a comprehensive student leadership integration plan designed to give students a say in school decision-making. The principal approved the plan and put it into place, including designating student positions on the School Improvement Team.

Homelessness

Noticing rising rates of homelessness in MA, 7th graders in Boston, MA advocated for the passage of Bill 119, An Act to End Child Homelessness, sharing testimonies and organizing a Lobby Day at the Statehouse to ensure that families with children under the age of 18 could not be evicted from public housing until they had a new and safe place to live.

School Discipline

Concerned about the use of out-of-school suspensions for repeated-but-minor student discipline offenses, high school students in Providence, RI developed a best practice-based peer jury system, piloted it at their school, and submitted a recommendation for district-wide implementation. After their presentation to the Superintendent and her taskforce on the Student Code of Conduct, their proposal was written into the school district’s Student Discipline Code.



GOVERNMENT IN MY COMMUNITY SURVEY

You may not realize it but every day you interact with many government services: when you brush your teeth, or ride to school, or spend time in public parks, you're experiencing government in action. Government also impacts many of the issues you care about and can be integral in solving a lot of the problems you might see in your community.

Activity: Read and answer the questions about your community. Circle the number where the answer to “Does your community have” is yes. Next to each issue, the related government service is given, as well as examples of other ways that this service is used. When you are done with the survey, answer the reflection questions that follow.

Does your community have... (Circle where the answer is yes)	Related government service	Other examples of this service in action
1. Broken or not enough street lamps?	Electricity	Heat and air, traffic lights, street lamps, computer, television
2. Dirty water in the taps?	Clean Water	Drinking water, toilets, cleaning clothes and dishes, fire hydrants
3. A problem with drug usage?	Health Services	affordable healthcare, Medicaid and Medicare, mental healthcare
4. An inaccessible public transportation system?	Infrastructure and Transportation	DMV – drivers' licenses/permits, speed limits, roads, traffic regulation
5. Students who can't afford to attend college?	Public Education	Community colleges, public universities, athletic programs, scholarships and grants, guidance and career counselors, school bullying prevention, college affordability, school budgeting, standardized testing, extracurricular activities
6. High rates of unemployment, particularly among youth?	Labor Laws	Maximum hours, compensation/over time, worker's paid compensation – workers' rights, age restrictions, job training
7. Unsafe parks?	Parks and Recreation	Sports fields and teams, skate parks, public swimming pools, hiking trails
8. Negative relationships between citizens and the police force?	Law Enforcement	Public safety, drug enforcement, juvenile detention centers, prisons, parole procedures, community policing, gang violence prevention, gun regulation
9. Schools that offer discount lunches to select students?	Public Assistance	Food stamps, public housing, homeless shelters, affordable healthcare, social security,
10. Litter on roads and streets?	Environmental Regulation	Recycling services, trash services, pollution laws, public conservation, endangered species

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How many of the issues did you circle?

Are these issues that are important to you? Why or why not?

*What is going well in your community? (Take a look at the issues you did **not** circle)*

Do you think that the things that are going well in your community could exist without the government?

Do you feel that you have the power to change or improve any of the issues that you circled? Would you like to?



Government Comparisons: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: _____	Local/Municipal Level: _____
<i>What is the office called?</i>			
<i>Who is the head of it currently?</i>			
<i>Who chooses/elects them?</i>			
<i>What is their primary responsibility?</i>			
<i>What sub groups does this branch include?</i>			
<i>What are some topics/services that fall under this branch's control and influence?</i>			



Government Comparisons: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: _____	Local/Municipal Level: _____
<i>What is the office called?</i>			
<i>Who are our current representatives?</i>			
<i>Who chooses/elects them?</i>			
<i>What is their primary responsibility?</i>			
<i>What sub groups does this branch include?</i>			
<i>What are some topics/services that fall under this branch's control and influence?</i>			



Government Comparisons: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Group Competition Chart

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: _____	Local/Municipal Level: _____
<i>What is the office called?</i>	The President		
<i>Who is the head of it currently?</i>	Barack Obama		
<i>Who chooses/elects them?</i>	The people via the Electoral College		
<i>What is their primary responsibility?</i>	Executing the law		
<i>What sub groups does this branch include?</i>	Executive Departments		
<i>What are some topics/services that fall under this branch's control and influence?</i>	Education, Justice, Commerce, Homeland Security, Transportation, Housing		



Government Comparisons: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Group competition chart

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: _____	Local/Municipal Level: _____
What is the office called?	Congress – House of Representatives and Senators		
Who are our current representatives?	<i>Marsha Blackburn</i> <i>Bob Corker</i> <i>Lamar Alexander</i>		
Who chooses/elects them?	The people		
What is their primary responsibility?	Writing and passing laws, confirming the budget		
What sub groups does this branch include?	Congressional committees		
What are some topics/services that fall under this branch's control and influence?	Homeland Security, Nutrition, Budget, Energy, Natural Resources, Armed Services, Science, Veterans, Education		



Government Comparisons: WORD BANK Example

EXECUTIVE BRANCH Phrases	LEGISLATIVE BRANCH Phrases
<i>A. Mayor</i>	<i>M. the people</i>
<i>B. executing the law</i>	<i>N. General Assembly – House of Representatives and Senators</i>
<i>C. the people</i>	<i>O. aldermen and woman</i>
<i>D. Ken Moore</i>	<i>P. congressional committees</i>
<i>E. boards and commissions</i>	<i>Q. Jack Johnson, Charles Sargent, Glen Casada</i>
<i>F. governor</i>	<i>R. writing and passing laws, confirming the budget</i>
<i>G. executing the law</i>	<i>S. special topic committee</i>
<i>H. Children’s Services, Education, Health, Human Rights, Transportation, Correction, Wildlife, Labor</i>	<i>T. Infrastructure, Sanitation, Water Management, Fire, Parks, Law, Finance and Budget, Building and Zoning</i>
<i>I. Executive Departmental Agencies</i>	<i>U. the people</i>
<i>J. the people</i>	<i>V. writing and implementing city ordinances and regulations</i>
<i>K. Housing, Zoning, Transit, City Planning, Historical Preservation, Sustainability</i>	<i>W. Education, Criminal Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health and Welfare</i>
<i>L. Bill Haslam</i>	<i>X. Aldermen/women: Beverly Burger, Dana McClendon, Mike Skinner, Margaret Martin, Clyde Barnhill, Pearl Bransford, Ann Peterson, Bradley Blanton</i>



Government Comparisons: EXECUTIVE BRANCH - Completed Example

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: TN	Local/Municipal Level: Franklin, TN
What is the office called?	The President	F. Governor	A. Mayor
Who is the head of it currently?	Barack Obama	L. Bill Haslam	D. Ken Moore
Who chooses/elects them?	The people via the Electoral College	C/J. The people	C/J. The people
What is their primary responsibility?	Executing the law	B/G. Executing the law	B/G. Executing the law
What sub groups does this branch include?	Executive Departments	I. Executive Departmental Agencies	E. Boards and Commissions
What are some topics/services that fall under this branch's control and influence?	Education, Justice, Commerce, Homeland Security, Transportation, Housing	H. Children's Services, Education, Health, Human Rights, Transportation, Correction, Wildlife, Labor	K. Housing, Zoning, Transit, City Planning, Historical Preservation, Sustainability



Government Comparisons: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH - Completed Example

Facts	Levels		
	Federal Level	State Level: TN	Local/Municipal Level: Franklin, TN
What is the office called?	Congress – House of Representatives and Senators	<i>N. General Assembly- House of Representatives and Senators</i>	<i>O. Alderman and women</i>
Who are our current representatives?	Marsha Blackburn Bob Corker Lamar Alexander	<i>Q. Jack Johnson, Charles Sargent, Glen Casada</i>	<i>X. Aldermen/women: Beverly Burger, Dana McClendon, Mike Skinner, Margaret Martin, Clyde Barnhill, Pearl Bransford, Ann Petersen, Brandy Blanton</i>
Who chooses/elects them?	The people	<i>M/U. The people</i>	<i>M/U. The people</i>
What is their primary responsibility?	Writing and passing laws, confirming the budget	<i>R. Writing and passing laws, confirming the budget</i>	<i>V. Writing and implementing city ordinances and regulations</i>
What sub groups does this branch include?	Congressional committees	<i>P. Congressional committees</i>	<i>S. Special topic committees</i>
What are some topics/services that fall under this branch’s control and influence?	Homeland Security, Nutrition, Budget, Energy, Natural Resources, Armed Services, Science, Veterans, Education	<i>W. Education, Criminal Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health and Welfare</i>	<i>T. Infrastructure, Sanitation, Water management, Fire, Parks, Law, Finance and Budget, Building and Zoning</i>

ISSUE DEBRIEF

Chosen Issue: *Booming community growth leading to high traffic rates in Franklin, TN*

Brief background: *“U.S. Census data highlighted the city as one of the 15 fastest-growing with a population of more than 50,000, and Williamson County was the No. 1 county in America for job growth last year. In relation to these factors, business and property values have similarly spiked.” (Buie, Jordan. Growth Brings New Issues for Williamson County, The Tennessean: July 17, 2016)*

As the growth continues to increase rapidly, roads and infrastructure struggles to keep pace. As a result, traffic has increased exponentially.

I. Who does this issue affect?

All residents in the Franklin, TN area

II. What local government structures, people, or groups have addressed this issue?

The mayor, Ken Moore, City Administrator, Eric Stuckey, the City’s Planning and Sustainability Committee

III. What are these people or groups trying to achieve regarding this issue?

Alleviate traffic conditions

IV. What has been done thus far?

A new 10-cent tax dedication to increase investment in infrastructure (roads and transit options)

V. Which local branch has influence over this issue? Which group or individual?

The Executive – the Mayor and the Zoning/Planning Committees and Legislative – Aldermen and women – Alderman Clyde Barnhill

SAMPLE LIST OF SOLUTIONS FOR EXAMPLE ISSUE

1. *Provide better and more accessible public transit options*
 - a. *Although there is a trolley system, it does not take residents all the way to Nashville which is where a lot of them work or south of Franklin which is where a lot of them live.*
 - b. *A rapid transit bus system*
2. *Provide better incentives for carpooling*
 - a. *HOV lane exists, but additional incentives*
 - i. *Or additional promotional campaigns (benefits of carpooling – less pollution, relax while you ride, etc.)*
 - b. *Some companies provide additional incentives*
 - c. *Monetary incentives (at tolls?)*
3. *More and better bike lanes*
 - a. *Prioritize biking to ensure less people driving*
 - b. *Make biking to work safer*
 - i. *Include barrier between bikers and the cars, for example*
 - c. *Promotional campaigns for biking*
4. *Some companies/organizations/schools change work/school day hours*
5. *Additional and widened roads*
6. *Restrict curb side parking and use the space as additional driving space or reserve it for buses*
7. *Implement a program for faster clearing of accidents and breakdowns*
8. *Increase fuel taxes*



LETTER TEMPLATE #1

Date:

Dear _____,
person/group who has power over the issue

_____ is very important to me because _____
issue

_____. It affects _____
why the issue is important to me

_____ and needs to be addressed. What I would like you
People, communities that issue affects - could be self

to do is _____.
proposed solution

Sincerely,
Your Concerned Constituent

student name



LETTER TEMPLATE #2

Date:

Dear _____,
person/group who has power over the issue

_____ is very important to me because _____
issue

_____. It affects
why the issue is important to me

_____ and needs to be addressed. I want to thank you for
People, communities that issue affects – could be self

_____. Please
Solution that the person/ group has proposed or implemented

keep doing this important work.

Sincerely,
Your Concerned Constituent

student name

EXAMPLES OF STUDENT LETTERS

Option # 1

Dear *Mayor Moore*,

The high level of traffic in Franklin is very important to me because *it is making it harder and harder for me to get to my after school job on time*. It affects *me, but also everyone else in Franklin* and needs to be addressed. What I would like you to do *is provide better and more accessible public transit options. I'd like to be able to take reliable and rapid transit from Franklin to Nashville.*

Sincerely,
Your concerned Constituent
Alaina Hill

Option # 2

Dear *Mayor Moore*,

The high level of traffic in Franklin is very important to me because *it can make it hard to get to places on time*. It affects *me and everyone else who lives in our city*. I want to thank you for *the work you are doing to increase investment in infrastructure. I look forward to using the new roads*. Please keep doing this important work.

Sincerely,
Your Concerned Constituent
Chris Williams

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Beyond the Ballot Toolkit



6 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

#BeyondtheBallot
www.BeyondtheBallot2016.org

Engage in conversations with people who **DISAGREE** with you

Have meaningful discussions about issues that matter to you with people who will push your thinking



- **Find** people who come from different backgrounds and hold diverse perspectives
- **Engage** those who disagree with your position to understand why they hold their perspectives, and in order to further develop your own argument
- **Listen** to others and be open to disagreeing, compromising, and changing your position

Read & subscribe to a **LOCAL NEWSPAPER**

Keep up to date with local issues and debates



- **Identify** one or more local newspapers in your community
- **Bookmark** the newspaper website, sign up for regular updates to be sent to your email, and follow them on social media. Even consider getting it in print!
- **Read** articles about issues you care about and ones that are new to you

Lobby a **DECISION MAKER**

Persuade influencers to take action on an issue that you care about



- **Identify** relevant local decision-makers who can impact the issue you care about (e.g. assemblyperson, mayor, school district superintendent)
- **Get in touch** by calling them directly, arranging a face-to-face meeting, or sending a letter or email
- **Share** your research, argument, and proposed solution to convince them to support your position and take action to affect the issue

Write an **OP-ED** for a **LOCAL NEWSPAPER** or blog

Share your personal message about an issue that you care about



- **Identify** a newspaper or blog whose readers would be interested in your issue and editors to whom you can submit
- **Write** an op-ed that draws readers into caring about the issue, explains why the issue is a problem and addresses opposing arguments and offers a solution
- **Submit** your op-ed

Attend and **SPEAK** at a **COMMUNITY** or **POLITICAL BOARD MEETING**

Make your voice heard about an issue that's important to you and stay informed about local issues in your neighborhood



- **Identify** a community or political board (e.g. community board, school committee, city council) and see when its meetings are held
- **Research** the agenda for an upcoming meeting
- **Draft** a testimony to give at the meeting that includes a little about yourself, your position on the issue, an overview of possible opposing arguments and the specific action you want to see taken to address the issue
- **Attend** the meeting, give your testimony and listen to the positions of other attendees

Host a **POLITICAL GATHERING**

Share your personal message about an issue that you care about



- **Create** a vision for the gathering considering the ultimate goal of the convening, the format that will best help you accomplish the goal (e.g. a dinner, an assembly, a town hall, a panel discussion), & potential speakers and key guests
- **Arrange** the gathering logistics including space, time, participant and guest invitations
- **Create** a schedule and prepare appropriate content for the gathering
- **Host** the event!

COMMITMENT FORM

#BeyondtheBallot 
www.BeyondtheBallot2016.org

I'm going beyond
the ballot
by _____





LESSON EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

For those interested, the following is a list of ways to either extend this lesson past 2 days or to adapt it for use at a time other than post-election.

Extensions

1. Research Options:
 - a. Have students do individual or group research on one or all the community issues listed in the survey to first determine if these are prevalent in your community.
 - b. Once an issue is chosen by the class, have students do individual or group research on the issue to determine background information, statistics, etc. instead of having the teacher do the research and provide an Issue Debrief.
 - i. Student Groups could research different aspects of the issue instead of the issue in its entirety. For example, one group could look up the history of the issue while another could research current efforts to address it.
 - c. Have students do research on solutions to the class issue instead of having the students brainstorm and the teacher provide additional research.
 - d. The class doesn't have to only choose one issue. Students could split into groups and do research on different issues, present to the class, and then students in the class could choose which one they'd like to target for their letter.
 - e. Have students research their individual state and local representatives to determine their platforms and supported projects.
2. Writing:
 - a. Have students write reports on the extended research they do on the class or group issues.
 - b. Have students write longer letters at the end. They could include additional research and/or ideas and points for emphasis.
 - i. Students could edit their peers' work, too.
3. Action:
 - a. Have students track their commitment post lesson. They each made a commitment at the end so hold them accountable for it and have class check ins on student commitments.
 - i. Provide a class period(s) for students to actually work on fulfilling these commitments.
 - b. Students can do more than just write a letter to their local government officials.
 - i. They can call these people.
 - ii. They can ask to meet with these officials and give a presentation to them.
 - iii. They can hold a rally or gathering in their community.
 - iv. They can conduct a survey in their community and publish the results online, on social media, in the newspaper, etc.
 - v. They can make videos raising awareness about the issue and post these online.
 - vi. They can make infographics that they print and post in their community informing their community members about the issue.
 - vii. They can attend community meetings where these issues are discussed.
 - viii. ****Note: If your students participate in any of these things, we'd love to hear about it. Please share it and reference #BeyondtheBallot. We'd love to give your class a shout out for their dedication!**

Adaptations

1. This lesson could be used during a local election in your community. It could be used to help students become more informed about candidates who support the same issues. It could also be used after the local election in much the same way as it is currently being used.
2. This lesson can be done any time; it doesn't have to be right after the election. You'd only need to modify the initial political cartoon in the DO NOW in Lesson 1. This lesson is meant to inform students on how to make a change in their local community which is always relevant and always possible.